

## Engaging the Creative Imagination in Caring for Others and Ourselves

Please only choose ONE of the following two exercises to do during the online workshop. Make sure you have what you need ready to go on the day.

### Exercise 1 'Creative collage'

#### What you need:

- 1 sheet of A4 paper or card per person
- Glue
- Scissors
- Magazines of different kinds (see notes)
- OPTIONAL: Oil pastels, coloured textas and pencils, glitter, feathers, leaves, flowers or other found objects

#### Notes on finding images –

- You can find old magazines (try National Geographic) in op shops
- You can use old cards or wrapping paper designs
- You might like to select images from free sites online such as <https://unsplash.com/>

#### Instructions:

You can create a collage by pasting images and words cut out of a variety of magazines. It's best to have a wide range of images to choose from. For this workshop I suggest not using paper bigger than A4 but if you'd like to do more collage in the future you could use a large sheet of paper from an A3 sketchbook or a piece of cardboard or tape some A4 computer paper together to form a large background. Some people use coloured marker pens, pastels, or paints to add to the collage. Others might use glitter, feathers, objects from the garden and shells.

Some background information on collage from Irene:

Collage emerged out of the tradition of papier collé, a French term for the art of pasting paper onto paper (Strouse, 2014), and is defined by Butler-Kisber (2008, p.266) as 'the process of cutting and sticking found images and image fragments from popular print/ magazines onto cardstock'. The art of collage can be traced back to the time of the invention of paper in China, around 200 BC, and in the art of calligraphers in Japan in the 10th century. Catherine Moon (2002, p.18) explains that *'creating a collage is a structured activity that engages a client in making choices and organizing materials and can be symbolic of creating order out of fragmented aspects of life or chaotic feelings.'*

Collage can be particularly useful when working with someone who is not sure where and how to begin an art project. I remember Anna, whose mother was dying in a hospice after a very short illness. The family was in shock at how quickly her condition had deteriorated. After she was supplied with magazines, scissors, and glue sticks, Anna spent hours near her mother's bedside creating dozens of collages about her life, her birth country, the family home, and the vegetables she grew in her garden. Sadly, Anna's father was in a nursing home suffering from dementia and the family home was being sold. There were multiple losses for this family but somehow the cutting, arranging, and gluing provided a needed focus and something new was built up from fragments. After her mother died, Anna continued to make collages and drawings.

## Exercise 2 'Healing the pain in my life'

### What you need:

- 3 sheets of A4 paper per person
- Coloured markers e.g., coloured textas and pencils
- OPTIONAL: You might like to use oil pastels, crayons, or paint if you have these to hand

### Instructions:

This is a three-step process. Use your coloured markers to create images on the pages.

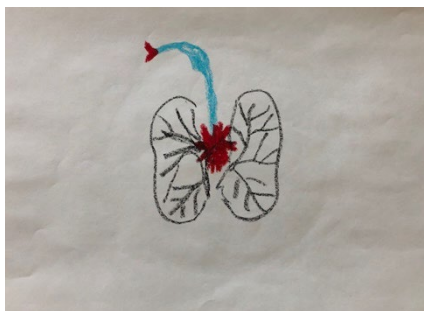
Step One – Take one sheet of paper. Imagine a symbol of your pain, give it some colour and form, and then draw this image on the first piece of paper. Set this aside.

Step Two – On the second piece of paper, imagine and draw a symbol of healing. Set this aside.

Step Three – Observe the first two images side by side, without judgement. On the third sheet of paper, create a new drawing which combines both the pain and the healing symbols in a new way. Notice the way the images change. Notice any change in thoughts and feelings.

### Example:

This example by Nicola Sherwin-Roller focuses on her experience of the pandemic.



**Image 1 The Pain:** This image is a response to the current pandemic and the fear of not being able to breathe. As someone who experiences asthma from allergies, I understand the feeling of not being able to get enough air. The sense of air being blocked is represented by a red ball (covid-19) blocking the air's pathway into the lungs so that they cannot breathe.



**Image 2 A Healing Symbol:** This image represents my evening walks, being in nature. Since the pandemic began my nightly walks have taken on a deeper meaning and purpose. I am privileged to live in the countryside with my family which includes 3 horses and the dog. After a very long winter the spring sunshine and the colours it is bringing forth in the world have been a balm to my spirit. During this time of quarantine walks have become a meditative practice, with dog and cell phone camera I have been open to the shapes, textures,

colours, and patterns around me. I photograph the dog, water in the hollows of land made by the melting snow, the ripples on its surface made by the wind, the sun creating diamonds in the pond, reflections. Pictures of the horses. Pictures of the shadows cast by us on our walks, the yellow stubble of the fields marking lines through everything.



**Image 3 Combine Image 1 & 2:** The lung shapes are above the blue water the tree roots have connected with them and are breathing for them, there is a connectivity and a wholeness. In nature I can breathe again. The Covid-19 is now not able to block the airway. The lungs become suspended by the roots and the red “Virus” is directly under the sun like a deeper reflection of itself. Sunlight dots their surface, and they could be butterflies or a moth, which is filled with light and air.

Some background information on this exercise from Irene:

In 1995, while attending the World Gathering on Bereavement in Seattle, I met Sandra Graves-Alcorn, founder of the Art Therapy Program at the University of Louisville, Kentucky. Graves-Alcorn led a ‘Healing the Pain in My Life’ workshop which I can still recall very clearly and have frequently used as an art journaling exercise and teaching tool over the past 25 years. I have always found it helpful and often transformative in a surprising way. I am basing the following description of this exercise on an account that Graves-Alcorn provides in a book, *Implementing the Expressive Arts Continuum: A Guide for Clinical Practice* (2017), co-authored with her daughter-in-law and fellow art therapist Christa Kagin. In the book, the exercise is called ‘Images of Pain and Healing’ (pp.71–75).

With Graves-Alcorn’s permission, I have introduced this exercise in workshops with bereavement counsellors as well as art therapists. I have often been surprised by what seems to be a significant transformation of the pain in the third drawing. The pain often shrinks in size or is enveloped by the healing image. In her book, Graves-Alcorn (Graves-Alcorn and Kagin, 2017, p.72) describes this direction as ‘*painting the healing surrounding or breaking apart or integrating with the pain*’.